

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Sally Sakamoto Matsuoka

"Well, there were good thoughts about the camp at the ranch because we stayed in a home that was vacated by another ranch employee. And the only inconvenience was the using of the community bath and the . . . community laundry rooms. However, the good impression that I have, and I still remember, is the beautiful phlox flowers that they planted in a circular form in that area . . . And the nice hibiscus hedges and the pine trees, the cool air, and the once-in-a-while kind of fog that used to come down the hillside . . ."

Sally Sakamoto Matsuoka, the second of seven children, was born June 16, 1930 in Waimea on the Big Island. Her father, Kuniichi Sakamoto, first worked on a ranch in Waimea, then moved the family in 1936 to Waialua, O'ahu, where he worked for Waialua Sugar Company. In 1939, the Sakamotos moved to Kō'e'le, Lāna'i when Kuniichi Sakamoto was offered a job on Lāna'i Ranch by then manager Ernest Vredenburg.

Sally attended Lāna'i High and Elementary School. While attending school, she took on a variety of jobs: baby-sitting the school principal's child, pineapple picking, and gathering kiawe beans for cattle feed.

After graduating in 1948, Sally left for Honolulu to attend the University of Hawai'i. She taught briefly, then worked for Honolulu Iron Works for twelve years.

Sally, her husband, Patrick Matsuoka, and her family live in Honolulu. She recently revisited Lāna'i to celebrate Lāna'i High School's fiftieth anniversary.

Tape No. 16-11-1-88
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Sally Sakamoto Matsuoka (SM)

August 6, 1988

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Mina Morita (MM)

MM: This is an interview with Sally Sakamoto Matsuoka for the Kō'ele oral history project on August 6, 1988 at Honolulu, Hawai'i. The interviewer is Mina Morita.

So let's start with your name.

SM: Okay. My name is Sally Sakamoto Matsuoka.

MM: Where were you born?

SM: Born in Waimea.

MM: Waimea. . . .

SM: Hawai'i.

MM: On the Big Island?

SM: Uh huh.

MM: Okay. And your birth date?

SM: June 16, 1930.

MM: And your parents' names?

SM: Well, my dad's name was Kuniichi Sakamoto, and my mother's name was Misao Igawa Sakamoto.

MM: Where was your father born?

SM: My dad was born in Waimea on the Big Island.

MM: And your mother was born. . . .

SM: In Hilo.

MM: In Hilo. And what kind of work did your father do?

SM: Well, in his younger days, I believe, before he was twenty, he did horse racing, horseback, I think he was a jockey. Or, I've forgotten her name, but she's a horsewoman. I believe she's still alive in Waimea.

MM: Oh, she owns a ranch in Waimea.

SM: Right.

MM: Is that--I forgot her name . . .

SM: She has an annual horse show, I believe, in Waimea.

MM: Uh huh. Oh, Fiske. Was it Anna Perry-Fiske?

SM: Right. Anna Perry-Fiske.

(Interview interrupted, then resumes.)

MM: So let's continue with your father again. He started up as a jockey.

SM: As a jockey, and ever since then, he's been a horseman.

(Laughter)

MM: And how about your mother? Did she work?

SM: No, not really. She was a housewife, but then after we got to Lāna'i--before the last three children were born, she worked for the ranch manager, you know, in the cooking area, or whenever they had parties, she would go and help them.

MM: And then, earlier, when I spoke to you, you also mentioned something about your grandfather was possibly an interpreter?

SM: Oh, right, on the Big Island, he was an immigrant from Hiroshima, Japan.

MM: Okay, is this your paternal grandfather?

SM: Maternal.

MM: Maternal.

SM: Oh, excuse me. My paternal, that's right.

MM: And what was his name?

SM: His name was Kunihiro Sakamoto, and I understood he worked with immigrants in the camp, and he was versed enough in Japanese--no, in

Hawaiian, that he was able to sort of act as the liaison, you know, person between them.

MM: And he spoke English, too, then?

SM: Well, pidgin, I believe, yeah. Pidgin, Hawaiian and Japanese. This was also in Waimea. I believe it started somewhere in Hilo with the sugar plantation. Then, I guess he gradually, you know, moved over to Waimea.

MM: So, your father was raised in Waimea?

SM: Right, right.

MM: And raised in the sugar plantation?

SM: No, it was more horse country there. And then they had these camps or--I don't know what sort of work they did, but I assumed it was sugar, but probably construction, and making those water irrigation ditches in the mountains because Waimea is, you know, a mountainous area. And then, of course, they had ranches there, too, so they worked with horses as part of their, you know, working horses, whatever you call.

MM: So after---well, just for curiosity, after you grew up, did you go back and visit your grandparents in Waimea?

SM: Well, no, no. We left Waimea when I was six years old. Went to Waialua [O'ahu], and that was another Castle & Cooke [Company]. At that time, it was called Hawaiian Pineapple [Company]. There was a Hawaiian Pineapple ranch that started out in Waialua. [Later, SM says that the ranch was owned and operated by Waialua Sugar Company.] And my dad was there for only two years. The ranch was probably an experiment. It was in an experimental stage, and I imagined it didn't work out too well so they closed it. And then my dad had gone to Lāna'i after that.

MM: I see. So you were just about eight.

SM: Right.

MM: Eight years old [1939] when you went to Lāna'i . . .

SM: Eight or nine. Eight and a half.

MM: And what was your first impression when you went to Lāna'i?

SM: Well . . .

MM: But first of all, how did you get there?

SM: We went by boat on the Humu'ula.

MM: And where did you leave from?

SM: We left from up here in Honolulu.

MM: Probably in the Honolulu Harbor?

SM: Probably, uh huh.

MM: You remember the boat ride?

SM: Oh, yes I did. (Laughs) Very sick, and I remember the trip taking a period of a night and probably a day. So probably it may have been a twenty-four hour, or maybe less. No, no, it must have been just about an overnight trip.

MM: Did you leave in the late afternoon or early in the morning?

SM: You know, I don't remember, but I remember the night. So it must have been afternoon or evening that we left.

MM: Was that a passenger ship or a cargo ship?

SM: Probably both because I know there were a whole lot of passengers. All sick.

(Laughter)

MM: Did your household goods go with you, too, or did it come at another time?

SM: I don't remember that.

MM: Okay, so you arrived at Lāna'i at Kaumalapau Harbor?

SM: Right. Rode onto a little rowboat, and then got into the harbor.

MM: I see. And was someone there to meet you?

SM: I don't remember that, but I'm sure someone took us, because I remember staying with the Vredenburgs who had been the ranch manager then, and we stayed in his little cottage. And I think that cottage is way up above--it used to be adjacent to the office, sort of an L-shaped building, cottage.

MM: Near the manager's house?

SM: Right, uh huh.

MM: Okay. Mr. Vredenburg also was the ranch manager at Waialua with your father?

SM: You know, I don't remember that. I don't remember that. [Ernest Vredenburg took over management of Lāna'i Ranch in 1935.]

MM: Maybe you can go back and tell me more. Your father and Mr. Vredenburg knew each other . . .

SM: Right.

MM: . . . from Waimea?

SM: From the Big Island.

MM: Big Island, I see. Okay. And, let's see, how did you get from the harbor up to Kō'e'ele?

SM: By car, I believe.

MM: Okay and then . . .

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

MM: Okay, let's go back and talk when you first moved to Lāna'i, and your first impressions of Lāna'i.

SM: Well, there were good thoughts about the camp at the ranch because we stayed in a home that was vacated by another ranch employee. And the only inconvenience was the using of the community bath and the community rest rooms, you know, community laundry rooms. However, the good impression that I have, and I still remember, is the beautiful phlox flowers that they planted in a circular form in that area where you had the community bath and the bathrooms, where the pool hall or the rec room used to be. And the nice hibiscus hedges and the pine trees, the cool air, and the once-in-a-while kind of fog that used to come down the hillside . . .

MM: It still does. (Chuckles)

SM: It still does. And the crisp air, you know. At first, having moved from Waialua to Lāna'i, it took a while to get adjusted to that kind of a cool weather. But it was nice, we got adjusted to it.

MM: Was the camp in Waialua similar to the camp on Lāna'i?

SM: No, no. Very different because the one in Waialua were, I believe, individually-owned residences. So it was like another city. I don't know what the arrangement was, whether the company paid for our rent or whether my dad used to pay his rent, but it was called Ranch Camp, though, you know.

MM: Kō'e'ele was called the Ranch Camp?

SM: In Lāna'i.

MM: Yeah.

SM: And in Waialua, there's a place called Ranch Camp. But then there

weren't very many employees working for the ranch then for Waialua Sugar [Company]. Oh, I'm sorry, it was for Waialua Sugar, not Castle and Cook or Hawaiian Pine that started the ranch in Waialua. And a lot of the homes in Ranch Camp were owned by individuals and they weren't necessarily ranch employees, whereas on Lāna'i, everybody in the camp belonged to the ranch as workers.

MM: Yeah, yeah. So was the setting itself different, I mean, how did the . . .

SM: Well, it seems like the camp on Lāna'i was closely knit, you know. Everybody knew everybody, and I remember the children all playing together. And you knew when school was out because you'd hear the chatter of children and everybody yelling, playing. But then, we stayed in that cottage for a short while, and then we moved over to the other one that was more isolated.

MM: A month or two months or . . .

SM: I believe, chee, I don't remember. It wasn't too long. Probably a month or maybe two.

MM: So at that time while you were staying in that house temporarily, you had to walk up, use the community bathrooms . . .

SM: Right.

MM: . . . and, okay. (Chuckles) Was that an adjustment for your family?

SM: For me it was.

(Laughter)

MM: How about the rest of your family? Were you ever in that type of situation before?

SM: No, never, never, as far as that community bath was concerned.

MM: Did it upset your mother?

SM: That I don't know.

(Laughter)

SM: I guess I wasn't too happy about it because that seems to have been blocked off from memory, you know. But I do remember we didn't have a bathroom in the house per se, and it was uncomfortable (laughs).

MM: And then so, later on, you moved to another home?

SM: Another home that had its own little bathtub and toilet facilities.

MM: Besides the manager's house, do you think that was the only house in the area that had private facilities?

SM: Well, there was another house that--you mean in the camp?

MM: Yeah.

SM: That, I don't know. I imagine they were all the same, but I had no idea.

MM: (Chuckles) So, this other house that you moved into, how did it compare to the first house?

SM: Well, the second house was a lot smaller, you know. But then, for me, because of the bathroom facilities, I guess it was okay.

MM: You were happier?

SM: Yeah.

(Laughter)

MM: Oh, I forgot to ask you. Could you tell us about your other brothers and sisters and . . .

SM: Okay. There was one brother who was older than I. And then I had three other brothers and two other sisters, so altogether we had, I had four brothers and two sisters.

MM: Okay. And so you're the second oldest?

SM: Right, uh huh.

MM: So, what are their names? The oldest to the youngest.

SM: Okay. The oldest is Kenneth, then I came along. Then I'd have a brother Morrey, Amy, my sister, then another sister Lorraine, then the twins, the two boys, Ted and Tom.

MM: I see. What was your father's position?

SM: I believe he was a luna, unless he was just another ranch hand, and then became a luna. But I don't remember what position he started out with.

MM: Yeah. Do you have an idea of what his schedule was like?

SM: Well, I remember he used to go out early in the mornings, and many times, he'd be coming home at sundown. And when the weather was bad, he'd take a trip to the stables to see if everything's okay. I mean, there were many times he'd go back and do some checking or whatever. Or if a calf or a little horse is born, then he would be going there often with his little lantern. Instead of a flashlight,

they'd be carrying this kerosene lantern and go.

MM: So if, you know, a horse foaled, the cowboys would come and get him?

SM: No, no. It was all done by foot.

MM: Oh, no, no, but they would come and call him or did he just--was he the person that people came to if there was a problem?

SM: I don't remember that. I don't remember. Lot of times, I think, he did it on his own, going to check on a foal or. . . . And then I remember their milking cows. They used to milk them, and I believe that must have been a daily chore. So then that had to be done early in the morning.

MM: Uh huh. So, he was in charge of the milking?

SM: That, I don't know, but I remember he did some milking. Then they had this beautiful stallion, the Appaloosa called Freckles. And that was the pride and joy of everybody up there, I think. And he used to check in on him quite often, too.

MM: Did he have a special pen or special area?

SM: That, I don't know. But I know that stallion was housed in a certain, what . . .

MM: Stall.

SM: . . . a stall in the stable. And then, he'd be working Sundays, too, I remember, to feed those in the stables, in the stalls. I don't know whether they were cattle or horses, but (chuckles) whatever they were.

MM: Animals. (Chuckles)

SM: Mm hmm.

MM: Let's talk about, like a typical school day for you. What would a typical day be like?

SM: Well, I remember . . .

MM: As a young girl?

SM: Well, I remember always this cold air on Lāna'i, this chill. But then, oddly, we weren't covered with jackets or sweaters. I remember having a short-sleeved sweater that I had used often, and when I think back, that sweater was a very, very (chuckles) lightweight. And maybe for the lack of heavier clothing, maybe, I always felt cold. (Chuckles) But anyway, our school days started early because we had to travel from the Ranch Camp down to the school, and . . .

MM: The school in Lāna'i City? [Lāna'i High and Elementary School]

SM: Right, uh huh. And then . . .

MM: How early did you have to get up?

SM: Well I remember leaving home at seven, so we must have gotten up at about six, six-thirty.

MM: Did you have chores to do before?

SM: Oh, yes, I did . . .

MM: What kind of chores?

SM: . . . I did at home. Well, number one was wiping the floor, (chuckles) wiping the floor and being certain that the bathroom was clean. And . . .

MM: And wiping the floor or mopping the floor?

SM: Wiping.

MM: You had to go down and . . .

SM: Yeah . . .

MM: . . . wipe the floor.

SM: . . . on the knees. I guess it was because the house was so small. But then, it wasn't the whole house, mainly the bathroom and the kitchen, but then if that wasn't done daily, then we would do it after school or during the weekends. But weekends were really taken up with laundry, you know, washing and ironing. And other things . . .

MM: So the first thing in the morning, you have your little chores to do. And then?

SM: And then, being on time for the bus, and there were many times we missed the bus and had to . . .

MM: What happened when you missed the bus?

SM: Then we had to walk down.

MM: Around how long would it take to walk to school?

SM: Oh gosh, enough to just make it, you know. (Chuckles) Just make it when the bell rang. And the bad part is we had to walk through the golf course which was full of dew. But that's another thing I didn't mention, my impression on Lāna'i, the dew.

MM: Very wet in the morning.

SM: Lots of dew. And so your feet would get all wet. But then, it was fun. (MM chuckles.) We just made sure not to miss the bus on rainy days. Then school would be out at about two-thirty or three, I believe. And this went on until the sixth grade. After the sixth grade, I remember doing work after school, right throughout high school, you know. I would go to the principal's home for dinner and dinner chores. And . . .

MM: Who was the principal at the time?

SM: At that time, it was Mr. [Alton] Armstrong.

MM: And his house was located where?

SM: Just above ours.

MM: Above the reservoir?

SM: Right.

MM: So that was your work, you had to go up there?

SM: Right. I did . . .

MM: Right after school?

SM: Right, mm hmm. Now when I think back, there was baby-sitting to do until dinnertime. There was a little two-year-old boy. Mr. Armstrong's name was Alton. A-L-T-O-N. Then his little boy that I baby-sat for was named Sidney, Sidney Armstrong. He was just two years old. Very, very smart (chuckles). And after they came home from school--because Mrs. [Rose] Armstrong was also in school, she was a schoolteacher. And so after they came home, I would help with their dinner. And when the Armstrongs left [Lāna'i in 1942], then the Churches came in, Dr. [A. M.] Church came in as principal, I didn't get to do any work there because their children were grown. And then [in 1943] we had Mr. [Murray] Heminger, H-E-M-I-N-G-E-R. Oh, there I did a lot of work, you know, like helping with the dinner and going home after doing the dinner dishes. So that went on until I was an eleventh-grader, I believe. And . . .

MM: What kind wages did you get? Do you remember?

SM: Oh, that was something like five dollars a week. (Chuckles) That was good, you know.

MM: So when did you get your schoolwork done? You had such a busy schedule.

SM: I managed. I guess, I managed. (Chuckles)

MM: So at eleventh grade, then what did you do?

SM: It was all schoolwork, you know.

MM: So you didn't work after school?

SM: No.

MM: Okay. And did you have more household chores to do?

SM: I always did. Always did on the weekend.

MM: Being the oldest girl?

SM: Right, mm hmm. Like on Sundays was a full day of laundry, you know. If it's not washing, it was . . .

MM: How did you do the laundry? I mean, did your house have electricity yet?

SM: Yes, we did. It was only after the war we were able to have a washing machine.

MM: So all the laundry was done . . .

SM: By hand.

MM: . . . by hand.

SM: Mm hmm, until 1945 or '46. That was when I was a sophomore in high school. But until then, it was done by hand.

MM: And how did you do it? Did you use the community laundry room?

SM: No, no. Here [Kō'ele] we had our own laundry room, so it was okay.

MM: So that, did that mean boiling the clothes and . . .

SM: Right. Boiling, scrubbing with the brush, applying soap to the clothes and rubbing it on the wooden . . .

MM: Washboard.

SM: . . . yeah, washboard, and boiling the whites, or boiling the working clothes, too.

MM: It was hard work.

SM: Oh, yes. And during the summer, we used to work in the fields, the pineapple fields. During the war years, we used to pick up the kiawe beans at Keomuku.

MM: For who? For the cattle?

SM: I believe it was for the cattle. They were storing that in the event there wasn't any shipping lanes open for cattle feed. In the event there was no shipping down from the Mainland. I don't know for what, other than that, I can't think of any other purpose. But they stored these in huge warehouses down past Keomuku.

MM: By the old [Kahalepalaoa Landing]?

SM: Right.

MM: Okay.

SM: Where that train is, you have the remnants of a train.

MM: So who picked up the kiawe beans? Students or older people, or. . . .

SM: I believe they were just students because there'd be truckloads of us going down, maybe two or three trucks taking us down there every day.

MM: And you would just go through the bushes and pick up beans?

SM: Right, mm hmm. (Chuckles)

MM: And put 'em in. . . .

SM: Bags, burlap bags. And, I don't know what our payments were, whether it was twenty-five cents a bag or twenty-five cents a pound. Must have been twenty-five cents a bag.

MM: Amazing. (Chuckles) Let's see. Did you also do the shopping and stuff for groceries?

SM: No.

MM: Who did that for your family?

SM: My dad did it. My dad did the shopping. In fact, the ranch supplied the driver and the truck, I believe, or the bus. Did we have a bus, oh, I don't know. And they'd go down to the city once a week, I believe, once a week. And he would pick up whatever because I don't remember my mother shopping. And then, he'd charge it at this Yet Lung Store. And at the end of the month when he got paid--I think they were paid in cash? I don't know how it worked, but anyway, at the end of the month when he'd get his paycheck or pay envelope, he would pay off his monthly charges and then come home.

MM: How about--did you have a vegetable garden?

SM: My mom did.

MM: So you supplied the family?

SM: I believe she did, uh huh. So, he probably bought the meat products or canned products or dried goods. But, well, Mom also raised some ducks, turkeys, chickens. So, I remember having those on the table. So like he would buy butter and other staples that we couldn't produce. Otherwise, she had us well supplied with veggies, you know, strawberries.

MM: You mentioned that your mother used to work for the Vredenburgs . . .

SM: Right, uh huh.

MM: . . . as a housekeeper?

SM: Yes, uh huh. But this was after the last three were born which didn't give her too many years at home. So when the children started to go to school, kindergarten, I believe right after the war or during the war, she had gone to work as a housekeeper there.

MM: And you mentioned that every once in a while you'd go and help her . . .

SM: Right, uh huh. When she [Mrs. Vredenburg] had her once-a-month parties, I'd go for serving, or doing the dishes after the party. She'd have at least twelve, because I remember setting the table. Twelve or probably more, you know.

MM: So was being ranch manager a prominent position on Lāna'i for Mr. [Ernest] Vredenburg?

SM: You know, I think it was, because I remember those who were invited were people who lived on the hill. And they were all Caucasians. Never did I see any other, you know. (Chuckles)

MM: Could you describe the Vredenburgs' home?

SM: Well, their home was U-shaped, I believe U-shaped. And they had this veranda that ran right alongside the inner U. And one end was the kitchen and it was a sizable kitchen. Then they'd have their--what would you call that--anyway a little storage area for their supplies. Then they'd have their dining room. That made up one end of the U. And then there was a bathroom, a little one there. Then they had a beautiful sun deck, the bottom of the U, I remember. And then their nice bedroom, and there probably was another bedroom to that end. That I don't remember, but then the other end of the U was their living room. And I believe he had a den somewhere in that area, too. What I remember about his furniture is that they were very Hawaiianish, you know. Very Hawaiian because there would be this huge sofa, I don't know what you would call it in Hawaiian, but it was a kind of Hawaiian furniture. It was hard, but then you would pad it. But it was made

out of wood. Whether it was koa, I'm not too sure. And their dining room table was koa, I remember, and that was really nice.

MM: I know it was an older house.

SM: Yes, very old, but spacious.

MM: How was the manager's property in comparison to the rest of the ranch?

SM: Oh, huge. I would say it was immense. Beautiful yard, he had it well kept. His front yard was really huge. I would say it was about three times larger than that recreational area that the camp had. And then on one side--on the top side of the U, you'd have his huge lawn and beautiful trees, you know, all sorts--it was just like Foster Garden [on O'ahu] 'cause he had these exotic plants in the front. And in the back, also, he had a few plants that were very . . .

MM: Was he interested in plants or was everything there?

SM: I think they were there. I don't think he planted them. Then on the other side of his front yard, he'd have a tall hedge. Then he'd have his vegetable garden. And that was another nice area.

MM: Who was the gardener?

SM: I don't know. I know people came and did the mowing and, I guess there wasn't one particular person.

MM: Just different people from the ranch would come over.

SM: Probably. I don't remember exactly who was the main person doing that.

MM: After you folks relocated when you first moved, you moved into your second house, did you, as a child, join in activities at the ranch with the other kids?

SM: Hardly ever, mm hmm, hardly ever.

MM: So how did you spend your holidays?

SM: Well, I guess I did a lot of sewing, but then, I guess I helped around in the yard, did extra housework. A lot (chuckles) a lot of my time was confined at home or out there working, you know. But like my brother Morrey who was below me, I remember his taking or participating in these hula sessions that they used to have. I don't know whether they were preparing for programs or what, but I remember he used to go and do the hula with the other boys like with, what's his name, Charlie-boy.

MM: Charlie Kwon?

SM: Yeah, Charlie Kwon.

MM: So, what's the age difference between you and Morrey?

SM: Three.

MM: Three years. So, he was allowed to go and do these different activities or . . .

SM: I guess being a boy, he was. Or, if he were asked--I was never asked, so I probably didn't go for hula, but then I remember he was asked to go, and he went, you know.

MM: How do you spell Morrey's name?

SM: M-O-R-R-E-Y.

MM: Okay. What about school activities? Did you participate in school activities?

SM: I remember working with the school newspaper, so that took a lot of my time. Therefore, I stopped working in my junior year. Then we did a lot of committee work, but that never went beyond, you know, after school.

MM: During school hours?

SM: Yeah, we did it all during school hours. The only thing that took extra time was the school paper. But then that would be just a few afternoons a month, just before the paper was printed. We took in all the proms and such, but other than that, I don't remember too many activities.

MM: No, but it seemed like, at that time, Lāna'i had a lot of pageants and things like that. Did you go to them or belong to different clubs? It seemed like they had a lot of social activity going on at that time.

SM: You know, I don't remember those, maybe because I didn't go. But I remember the carnivals that used to come along, like E.K. Fernandez.

MM: Who would put on the carnivals?

SM: I don't know.

(Chuckles)

MM: So they used to bring all the rides and things?

SM: The rides I remember, but I don't remember animals or those sideshows. I remember the rides.

MM: Was it a special time during the year that they came?

SM: Chee, I don't remember that. But there were a few that we never missed.

(Laughter)

MM: How about, were you active in any church activities or . . .

SM: No, no.

MM: . . . Hongwanji . . .

SM: No, no.

MM: . . . or anything like that?

SM: No.

MM: What did your family do for recreation?

SM: I don't think we did too much. Right after the war, or was it during the war, I remember Morrey was able to drive a army van, and we used to go to Keomuku or what is that, that shipwreck.

MM: Yeah, some people call it Shipwreck Beach, that side.

SM: Shipwreck Beach.

MM: That side.

SM: Several times, and I think that's about the only recreation as a family that we had done together. Other than that--oh, there was a lot of hiking that we did on those hills . . .

MM: In back of the ranch.

SM: In back of the ranch. But I don't remember going to that graveyard though, or that cemetery that your--someone mentioned on Lana'i that the children used to go to, but I don't remember going there. In fact, I didn't even know it existed. (MM chuckles.) Yeah, we did a lot of hiking. Short hikes.

MM: How did you spend holidays like Christmas and Thanksgiving, New Year's. Was it a special time, or did you do special things?

SM: Not really. We had no imported Christmas trees, so we would cut down a little pine branch along the reservoir, and we'd decorate it. That's about it. The thing I remember about Christmas is the Vredenburgs used to give Christmas gifts. Now, I don't know whether he did it for all the families, but I imagine he did, you know. And I remember receiving apples and oranges, and the apples were so delicious. And then you'd have the company Christmas party where we'd receive a lot of candies and such at that old gymnasium.

MM: Oh. So the entire Lāna'i City . . .

SM: Right, uh huh. We would go in as a school group, I believe, but it was given by the Hawaiian Pineapple [Company], you know, and as you walked out of the doorway, they'd be giving you packages of goodies. And I remember those Christmas hard candies that they used to pass out.

MM: Did they have programs at the . . .

SM: Yes, uh huh. Now whether it was produced by the school, I imagine so, produced by the school, and whatever goodies there were, the company donated them.

MM: What type of program did they have, do you remember?

SM: Oh, like the nativity scene. Real Christmas--I'd say the old-fashioned kind of program, like the shepherds, the wise men, you know, that sort of thing. That was the central theme, I believe, that they put on. And then there'd be a lot of Christmas caroling. And I don't think it took more than an hour. And then we'd all be dismissed and given all our goodies.

MM: Was it just for children or did the adults attend, too?

SM: I imagine it was only for the children. I don't remember that.

MM: How about--during the war years, could you describe what it was like? Did you have to make big changes in your life?

SM: Well, I don't know. I believe because, the Ranch Camp did not have as many Japanese as the city camps, I don't know, I felt this feeling of being very uncomfortable, you know, being Japanese. My dad would specifically say, "No Japanese to be spoken," because we did use a lot of Japanese phrases, you know, young as we were. Like, for one thing, we'd call my mother oka-san. And my dad says don't use Japanese words whether it's, you know, a title like that, so then, we started to call our mother, "Mom," you know. I don't know, it brought changes. Like we were Americans, but then because of our ethnic background, like when you hear people say, "Oh, you know the Japanese," and "Pearl Harbor," and all that, it seemed like it was directed to you. You know, I mean . . .

MM: Took it personally, yeah.

SM: Right, right, I mean there was no need to, but then, I don't know, that feeling was there. This feeling of being afraid or probably this feeling of being discriminated for being what we were racially. But other than that, I think, we always looked at it as, it could be worse because there were some people who were taken away [i.e., interned], yeah.

MM: Yeah. Was anyone from the ranch taken away?

SM: No, not that I know of.

MM: Were you the only Japanese family that lived in the ranch area?

SM: No, there was another one. There was a Kamisato.

MM: I haven't heard that name before.

SM: It was Mr. and Mrs. Kamisato and I believe they had two older children who were away. They were in Honolulu, but they did bring back a daughter after the war from Okinawa, so she settled on Lana'i, too, right after the war.

MM: I see.

SM: There were some--the Uyedas. U-Y-E-D-A. [Henry Uyeda.] But they left either before or after the war.

MM: Okay. I'm going to stop it and turn the tape around.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MM: Okay. Did you have to practice drills and things like that or make any household changes during the war?

SM: Not that I can remember. In school, though, we practiced putting on our gas mask. And I guess that was about it.

MM: What about your food supply and things like that?

SM: No, I don't remember. Oh, now when I think back, we dug air-raid shelters in the ground.

MM: At your house?

SM: Yeah, in the back. And it was, gosh, I remember the steps going down. It was L-shaped shelter and we'd have those steps. I believe it must have been ten feet underground. And we would have a supply of canned goods made ready in a box so whenever we went in there we'd be sure to take that box in. But then the air-raid siren would go off just about three times, I believe, that we really had to go underground. But, it wasn't a very good feeling. (Chuckles) So I don't remember any other provisions other than those canned goods.

MM: How about when you worked with your mom with the Vredenburgs, what kind of chores did you do? How did you help her?

SM: Okay, number one, we set the table, but then she would come and check it. Mrs. Vredenburg would come to check. And then--well,

most of the food preparation was done in the afternoon.

MM: Did your mother do all the cooking, too?

SM: I believe, because I remember she'd be there all afternoon, come home, feed our family, and then she and I would both get ready, take our baths, and then we'd go. So that would be about two hours at home and she and I would go back. So, by the time we got there, then in about thirty minutes, dinner would be served. So, I remember all the things ready to serve, you know. They were just being heated. And so, I'm sure she must have helped with the cooking and stuff. But then, they were very basic. The main entree was a roast beef or whatever, so that's in the oven and the rest are just vegetables, and then dessert would be just ice cream or--very simple, very simple dinner. It's just that they'd be a whole group of them.

MM: What kind of meals did you fix for your family?

SM: Who, me?

MM: Yeah. Or your mother, or what kind of things?

SM: Oh, I remember eating lot of steaks and pork chops and lot of roast chicken. My mother used to do a lot of roast turkey, also. Most of our dinners were meat, either meat or pork, turkey or chicken. And my mother did a lot of Japanese cooking, too, which my dad wasn't too keen on, but the children were raised on.

MM: I'm surprised. (Laughs)

SM: So then she had to do two kinds of cooking. One for my dad, and one for us because I don't think they could have afforded to feed the whole family meat, huh.

MM: I don't know. Maybe working for the ranch.

SM: I don't remember getting any meat stuff from the ranch, though, because--I remember getting the--what would you call it--like tripe or liver, or brains, yeah, breadbasket or whatever you call it. Or tongue, which I didn't care for. But I don't think we got steaks and things from the ranch, you know. Even the pork chops, I think we picked it up at the store, I'm not too sure.

MM: I know they had a piggery.

SM: And they used to slaughter them, too, huh.

MM: So after you graduated from Lāna'i, what did you do after that?

SM: I came out to Honolulu, spent two years at the University [of Hawai'i] and felt that social work wasn't going to be for me. And so I taught at Island Paradise School for a few years and then went

to work for Honolulu Ironworks. Then I got married and stayed home.

MM: (Chuckles) How long did you work at Honolulu Ironworks?

SM: Must have been about twelve years.

MM: Doing what position?

SM: As a traffic clerk. I guess you would call that incoming, outgoing, you know . . .

MM: Shipments.

SM: . . . shipments, uh huh. But they called it a traffic division, you know so, I did some work there.

MM: And so, were you--you had already left by the time the ranch closed down?

SM: Yes, uh huh.

MM: And then . . .

SM: My dad worked for the pineapple fields for about a year, I believe, year or two.

MM: In what position?

SM: I don't know.

MM: And then, did he retire?

SM: Well, he took a medical disability.

MM: I see.

SM: He met an accident on a truck and it involved cattle or horse. And either the truck moved and he lost his balance or whatever, but anyway, shortly after that, he had a stroke. So he must have still been working for the ranch, and then became disabled. That was the closing days, and then he got hurt, then a few months later, he became disabled and he stayed there for about a year and decided to move out to Honolulu where Morrey and I were living.

MM: How did your father ever get involved with horses? Did he ever talk about it or . . .

SM: Well, I guess because of his stature, he was only five feet, two [inches]. And I think he was initially exposed to horses when he was very young because his dad handled horses. In fact, his dad had a bite from a horse, and his hand was a bit crippled. So I guess it was through that, he got into racing horses and then did a bit at Parker Ranch on Waimea. And then he worked with the Von Holts,

Herman Von Holt for Kahuā Ranch. And then, I think, he met up with Mr. Vredenburg and he moved over to Waialua. That's right, Waialua Sugar is part of Castle & Cooke. But then Castle & Cooke and Hawaiian Pine, were they together at that time?

MM: I think later on . . .

SM: Or Hawaiian Pine was a subsidiary?

MM: Yeah. I think . . .

SM: Like all the plantation . . .

MM: Castle & Cooke eventually bought out Hawaiian Pine.

SM: Hawaiian Pine.

MM: I think it was in the 1930s they . . . [In 1932, Castle & Cooke acquired management control of Hawaiian Pineapple Company.] Dole was ousted and Hawaiian Pine, I mean, Castle & Cooke came in. [In 1932, James Dole was replaced as general manager by Atherton Richards, former treasurer of Castle & Cooke and director of 'Ewa and Waialua Sugar Plantations.]

SM: Oh, I see. Okay. So the Waialua gig was really with the Waialua Sugar Plantation. And then because it [i.e., the ranch in Waialua] folded or it was about to fold, I imagine Mr. Vredenburg told my father to come on to Lāna'i. So there he went, you know.

MM: So Mr. Vredenburg went first, and then your father came after?

SM: Yes, uh huh.

MM: Did you have any desire to ride horses or . . .

SM: Oh, I did, but we weren't allowed to. (Chuckles) And I believe it was because, oh, I don't know. My dad was very strict about that. He didn't want any of his family making a playground at the ranch. You know, I mean, we were really prohibited from prancing around there, (chuckles) except Morrey. You know, Morrey was always by his side. So, I imagine it's because of our sexes. We were not allowed to go. Well, I believe today that may have been the reason because we were girls and boys were--it's okay for them.

MM: So do you think he probably taught Morrey everything he knew . . .

SM: I imagine.

MM: . . . about horses?

SM: Yeah, because I think Morrey was a good rider.

MM: Was that your first time you went back to Lāna'i, for the reunion

[i.e., Lāna'i High School's fiftieth anniversary celebration, held in 1988]?

SM: Mm mmm. We'd been there five years ago.

MM: I see.

SM: And I believe five years prior to that. So this past reunion in March was our third trip back there.

MM: What kind of changes did you see? What were your impressions?

SM: It seems like it's drier. It's dustier. I always thought of Lāna'i as being damp and green and--well, the chill is still there, you know, the early morning and evening chill. But it seems like it's gotten dry.

MM: How about when--I didn't ask you anything about Lāna'i City, but growing up, what was Lāna'i City like?

SM: You mean, Lāna'i City as a . . .

MM: Going to school and the town itself?

SM: For me, it seemed like it was just a plantation town (chuckles) you know.

MM: How did it compare to, again, Waialua or even Waimea?

SM: I don't know. It seemed like Lāna'i was confining. When I grew up on Lāna'i, it seemed like there were a lot of restrictions. You know, like you're not to go up the hill [i.e., where the plantation managers lived], and we always used to say that was "snob hill." You're not to go riding up there even though not too many people had cars then. You're not to go up there to play. I don't know. And down in the city, just about everybody was out working during the daytime, except for maybe wives who stayed home, but there were a lot of households where both wife and husband would go out to work. Whereas like Waimea, it seemed like it was free. You know, you can--you weren't tied down like. But in Lāna'i, I don't know, it seemed as though you were in a cage, huh, I mean, you couldn't do too much. Although it is a nice place to live in. As an adult, I guess it shouldn't feel that confining, but as I grew up, you know.

MM: That's interesting. (Chuckles) And so, every time you've gone back there, I assume you saw different changes.

SM: Not really. I think it's the same. (MM chuckles.) It's the same except a few buildings that are different. The business buildings may be different but the homes are the same, you know. It seems like there are more flowers now, than before. In the different blocks, in the homes of the plantation workers.

MM: Why, there weren't flowers before?

SM: I don't remember, you know. I don't remember seeing so many yards with that many flowers.

MM: What about your yard when you were growing up, besides having a . . .

SM: Oh, we had all kinds of flowers and fruit trees, like avocado which didn't bear because it was still a young plant. Bananas . . .

MM: Those were planted by your family or other families or . . .

SM: I think my mother did. And maybe a few trees may have been there before, you know. But the avocado, we planted it, but it never bore fruit while we were there because it takes what, eight years?

MM: Chee, I don't know.

SM: To, you know, fruit . . .

MM: It takes a long time. I thought it was maybe two, three years.

SM: I think it takes longer than that.

MM: What kind of flowers did you have in your yard?

SM: Well, she had African daisies, gardenias, roses, what else? Ginger, bird of paradise, oh, the 'akulikuli' to make leis. What others?

MM: When kids got sick or anything like that, how did your parents take care of you?

SM: At home, or going to the hospital.

MM: Oh, did they . . .

SM: Yeah, well, a few times that someone got sick, I remember Mr. Vredenburg would have someone from the ranch, an employee, drive the sick child and my mom or whomever to the hospital to have him or her checked. Even when the two times my mother gave birth on Lāna'i, you know, she gave birth to the twins and then the girl, the ranch truck, pickup or, I don't know, sedan or, I don't think they had a sedan, probably a truck, pickup, would take her down and bring her home. Everything was done by the ranch for the ranch people, I believe, because I don't think anyone owned cars at that time. Or maybe a few did, but everybody relied on the company, I imagine, for transportation. So that was nice, you know, in a sense. Maybe that's where we have this feeling of confinement because we weren't free, yeah, to really travel on the island. Not having the means.

MM: I guess you could go if you wanted to walk.

SM: Right.

MM: (Chuckles) Otherwise. But didn't they have some kind of bus lines or other transportation or something?

SM: No, no.

MM: No? They didn't?

SM: They had buses going down to the [Kaumalapau] Harbor for the school children, buses for the ranch for the school children, but other than that, I think everything was done walking.

MM: I see.

SM: Because I remember going to the movies a few times, and we'd walk down to the city, to the theater, and walk home. No other means.

MM: No bicycle? Anybody had bicycle?

SM: I know my brothers had bicycles, but can you see a whole family riding their bikes?

(Chuckles)

MM: Was that a special treat, going to the movies?

SM: For me, it was. But then, that was very rare, because our weekends were really taken up with chores. And I remember that damp weather where your laundry didn't dry, you know. It was always musty and . . .

MM: Cold.

SM: Yeah. So we always had to, at the end of the day, pull our laundry off the line and put it over our kerosene heater, where we heat our hot water.

MM: So did you always have a kerosene heater?

SM: Mm hmm.

MM: Where did you get the kerosene from?

SM: I don't remember. I know we used to have a--I don't think it was a fifty-five gallon. Maybe it was, maybe a twenty- or twenty-five-gallon drum. But I don't know where we got it from.

MM: And that was placed in your yard?

SM: Mm hmm.

MM: I see.

SM: And we even had a kerosene stove in the kitchen.

MM: So whose job was it to fill up the tank?

SM: The boys. (MM chuckles.) Thank goodness. (Chuckles) It was theirs. The two boys used to do it.

MM: And so you did cooking, laundry. . . .

SM: Yeah, mainly laundry and a bit of housework. The housework was done when my mother was out working. But even before she worked, I remembered doing the bathroom. So there were chores that everybody did like dishwashing, too, you know, dinnertime. But of course, I wasn't home for dinner dishes, but it was during the weekends that my sister and I used to take turns. Or maybe it was weekends that I did the dishes and week days my sister did it at home because I wasn't there.

MM: How did you learn how to sew?

SM: In school.

MM: Home economics?

SM: You know we had our homemaking. And that helped a lot. So . . .

MM: Did your mother sew also?

SM: She did. I remember she sewed my dad's riding pants. He used to have, not the straight-legged jeans, you know the thing that sort of flared out? She used to sew his pants, and once a year, she'd sew about half a dozen of those to last him a year.

MM: And did she buy the fabric on Lāna'i?

SM: Yes, uh huh. They did have dry goods like cloth and. . . .

MM: Was clubs like, I don't know if they had university extensions at that time.

SM: I don't remember.

MM: How about 4-H? Anything like that?

SM: I don't think they did, no. But they did have Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts.

MM: Did you . . .

SM: I did a stint in the Girl Scouts, but it didn't last too long because there was so much (chuckles) activities, and I couldn't get away. So I stayed in the Girl Scouts for about a year and I quit although we learned a lot.

MM: Okay. Is there anything else that you'd like to add about . . .

SM: Lāna'i.

MM: . . . Lāna'i. Anything I . . .

SM: Not really.

MM: . . . may have forgotten to ask?

SM: No. It's just that it is a nice place.

MM: Oh, I know. Were 'ākulikuli leis a big thing on Lāna'i? It seems like everyone had the plant.

SM: I know it was very common for the ranch people to have the 'ākulikuli leis, but not the city people. But it was something of a rare lei of beauty, that people looked at it as, "Oh, wow! You know that's really terrific." And I'm not too sure whether the harbor people had it. There again, you know, the harbor and the ranch seemed like separate communities. And then the city people were another group, although it's a bigger group. So now, I don't know. I think the harbor used to have a lot of pakalana. Is it pakalana leis?

MM: Or pīkake?

SM: Oh, pīkake. I don't remember pīkakes. Could have been pakalana.

MM: I think pakalana, yeah.

SM: Couldn't be 'ākulikuli. I know harbor people had a certain kind of leis that the city or the ranch didn't have. I think the ranch had a lot of that 'ākulikuli. And gardenias. We used to have a lot of gardenia leis.

MM: Okay, I think that should do it for today. (Chuckles)

SM: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW

LĀNA'I RANCH

The People of Kō'ele and Keōmuku

VOLUME I

**Center for Oral History
Social Science Research Institute
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

JULY 1989